

**NITC Community Technology Fund 2000 Application
Community Technology Fund**

2001

Section I: General Information

Project Title: Internet Access for Children

Name of Submitting Entity: Scottsbluff Public Library

Project Contact Information:

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Certification for Request

I certify that to the best of my knowledge the information in this application is correct and that the application has been authorized by this entity to meet the obligations set forth in this application.

Authorized Signature: _____

Typed Name: Beverly Russell

Title: Library Director

Name of Entity: Scottsbluff Public Library

Date: February 16, 2001

Total State Funds Requested: \$ 5,529.80

Section II: Executive Summary

Because of a lack of filtered Internet computers, the Scottsbluff Public Library, in accordance with its Internet Policy, does not allow Internet access to children under twelve years of age. With the aid of the Community Technology Fund, the library plans to purchase two personal computers and a Laser Jet printer for the children's department. Filtering software will be installed on these computers. Additionally, in order to insure more privacy for Internet users, privacy screens will be added to the eight Internet computers in the adult library. By doing this, the Scottsbluff Public Library will enhance the educational opportunities it offers to all its patrons, most especially children under the age of twelve.

Section III: Goals and Objectives

Part of the mission of the Scottsbluff Public Library is to serve as "...children's door to learning..." as well as to provide "...Internet and online access for all segments of the population...". According to library board policy, children of ages twelve and under are not allowed access to the non-filtered Internet computers in the adult department. This policy results from concerns about the inappropriate nature of some materials that are available on the Internet. The Internet Access for Children Project aids the Scottsbluff Public Library in achieving part of its mission, by providing two computers with Internet access in the children's section of the library. Along with the computers for the children's room, funds derived from this project will allow the library to purchase filtering software for these computers, addressing concerns about the nature of materials which children might access.

The Scottsbluff Public Library, furthermore, respects an individual's right to privacy. In order to help insure the right of privacy, the library will use grant funds to purchase privacy screens for the eight non-filtered computers in the adult area, thus safeguarding the right to privacy more effectively. A second advantage of privacy screens is that other library patrons will be less likely to be offended by what they might inadvertently see on a computer screen. The public library's Internet Policy specifically forbids the display of "...any visual images containing nudity, obscenity or graphic violence;" however, often what is offensive to one is not necessarily offensive to others. Privacy screens will safeguard the rights of all patrons.

The Internet Access for Children project assists the Scottsbluff Public Library complete the goals of its Technology Plan. The library strives to be an information and technology center for the community of Scottsbluff and the surrounding area. Because of a lack of filtered computers, Internet access is not currently available to children twelve and under. With the aid of this grant, the public library will provide Internet access to all children as well as to adult users.

The Internet Access for Children project also supports the goals and priorities of both the NITC and the Community Council.

- NITC-1 & -3 are supported by this project because educational opportunities are broadened, and services are enhanced via the Internet.

- CC – 1 is supported by providing access to information technology (Internet) to all citizens of Nebraska.
- CC-3 is supported by providing children an opportunity to use information technology at the public library which helps to develop a workforce knowledgeable of and fluent in the use and application of information technology.

Section IV: Scope and Objectives

In the short term, the beneficiaries of the Internet Access for Children project are the children who will be allowed to use the Internet for their educational needs. Most directly, children of a lower socio-economic status are benefited because their families that are less likely to be able to afford their own personal computers much less access to the Internet. In the long term, society is benefited by a more informed and computer literate citizenry.

Among the expected outcomes for this project are expanded educational opportunities for all children, development of a workforce fluent in the application of information technology, and expansion of lifelong learning opportunities for all citizens of Nebraska regardless of age, location, or socio-economic status.

The success of this project will be measured in daily usage counts on these computers. Also, sign-in sheets for use of the computers will provide further usage information. Finally, observation by librarians will indicate the nature of the use which the computers receive.

A major constrain, that limits the management teams options, is the space available in the library for the addition of computers to the children's department. Currently, space is not available to add more than two Internet computers in the children's library.

Some of the assumptions relating to this project are as follows: Children should be provided an equal opportunity for access to information technology. Access to information through the Internet will help improve a child's performance in school. Use of computers in childhood will help to develop adults who will be literate in the use of information technology. Internet use in childhood will make adults more likely to access Internet as adults and help create lifelong learners.

Section V: Project Justification (Business Case)

It is practically impossible to place a dollar amount on the benefit to a child's education that Internet access might provide. During the past year over 2,500 juveniles (children ages five to twelve) held library cards at the Scottsbluff Public Library. Due to library board policy, none of those children were allowed access to the library's unfiltered Internet computers. Any reasonable person could assume that access to Internet technology and the information available on the Internet would have a huge benefit for the education of those children. A cost/benefit analysis of the benefit educationally for over 2,500 children versus the cost of the two computers and filtering software would weigh heavily on the side of the benefit to the children. Furthermore, in considering a life cycle cost analysis, the life cycle of the computers is probably ten years. The cost of the

computers is approximately \$2,000.00. This averages out to \$200.00 per year which is within an acceptable range.

The impact on the Scottsbluff Public Library and its patrons is positive for both. This project enhances the services that the library provides children to the benefit of both the library and the children. There is no negative impact to the library or its patrons. The project fills an important void in services. Staff is already on hand to monitor and assist children as they use the library. No added staffing is required, nor will any extra time or money be needed to keep the library open. Continuing costs of updating and replacing software and hardware will be included as part of the library's future budget requests.

Doing nothing is not an option. Children as well as adults need access to computers and the Internet if they are to become part of an increasingly technological world. Current budget limitations would delay this project a year or more as things presently stand. Why wait if the project could be implemented immediately through the Community Technology Fund. With this grant, "The future is now."

An additional factor in requesting this money is a recently passed federal mandate. In December 2000, Congress passed the Children's Internet Protection Act and the Neighborhood Children's Internet Protection Act. If the Supreme Court upholds the constitutionality of these laws, public libraries will be mandated to provide filters on all public access Internet computers. This project gives the Scottsbluff Public Library a headstart in meeting the requirements of this federal mandate.

Section VI: Implementation

The city of Scottsbluff and the Scottsbluff Public Library are the project sponsors, and employees of both the city and the library will be responsible for implementation of this project.

Project staff include Beverly Russell, Project Director; Jim Gaspers, Management Information Systems Coordinator; Paul Flack, LAN Administrator; Judy Oltmanns, Technical Services Librarian; and Dale Snyder, City Electrician. The Project Director is responsible for the overall coordination and operation of the project. The MIS Coordinator and LAN Administrator are responsible for purchasing and installing the hardware and software as well as the maintenance of the equipment. The city electrician will do the necessary wiring. The Technical Services Librarian is the in-house troubleshooter for the project.

The timeline for the project is as follows: Upon receipt of funding through this grant, all software, hardware, privacy screens, and furniture will be ordered immediately. The city electrician will be scheduled to do the wiring for the computers during that first month. Upon its arrival, the equipment will be set up and installed, and Internet Access will begin.

Because staff is already trained to assist the public with Internet use, no training or staff development is needed. On-going maintenance and support will be provided by the staff of the city of Scottsbluff and of the Scottsbluff Public Library.

Section VII: Technical Impact

The hardware required for this project includes two computers with monitors and a Laser Jet printer plus eight privacy screens for eight public access Internet computers already in use in the Scottsbluff Public Library's adult department. Along with the two computers, two computer workstations and seating are required. Included in the project is the cost of filtering software licenses for the two computers as well as the cost of wiring the computers.

The other technical impact issues requested in this section do not apply to this project.

Section VIII: Risk Assessment

The only important risk identified is the quality of the filtering software that will be used. No filtering software product on the market today is 100% effective at blocking every offensive sight on the Internet. Additionally, filtering software frequently blocks non-objectionable sights as well. Finally, what is objectionable to one person is not to another. What sights are filtered and what are not is a judgement call that could be interpreted as censorship and a violation of First Amendment rights.

In an attempt to minimize these risks, the project director devoted time to researching a variety of filtering products. CyberSitter was selected because it can be customized to meet the needs of library patrons. Passwords are also provided which allow library staff to override blocked sites if necessary. Finally, by providing both filtered and unfiltered Internet computers the Scottsbluff Public Library attempts to walk the fine line between the First Amendment and the protection of children from objectionable Internet sites.

The major impact if this project is not completed as proposed is that children who are twelve and under will continue to be denied free access to the Internet at the Scottsbluff Public Library. Rights to privacy for individual users as they access material on the library's non-filtered computers will also be impaired because of the lack of privacy screens on the non-filtered computers.

Financial Narrative Notes:

1. Librarian's salary: 61 hours weekly @ \$8.90 \$542.90 wk. \$28,230.80 yr.
2. Other contractual services: Electrician to wire computers 300.00
3. Capital Expenditures:

Hardware:	2 computers w/monitors	\$1,000.00 ea.	2,000.00
	1 HP LaserJet 4050 Printer		1,150.00
Software:	CyberSitter Filtering Software (2 licenses)		59.95
Network:	NA		
Other:	8 3M Privacy Plus Contour Filters	\$150.00 ea.	1,200.00
	2 Clustable Workstations	\$135.00 ea.	270.00
	2 Adjustable Computer Chairs	\$ 99.95 ea.	190.90
4. Other operating expenses: Electricity 9,200.00
Heating 4,800.00
5. Cash Match: NA
6. In-Kind Match: City of Scottsbluff Documentation: Annual Budget
Scottsbluff Public Library
7. External Funding: NA